

Q #1632

Doc. 5187

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Page 1

For the WAR CRIMES OFFICE

Judge Advocate General's Department - War Department

United States of America

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In the matter of the mistreatment of various American soldiers who were prisoners of the Japanese at Haito (phonetic) Prisoner of War Camp, on Formosa, by Captain Tamarki, from early in December 1944 to the end of January 1945.

Perpetuation of testimony of Sgt. JOHN L. MASSIMINO, ASN 20600454

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Taken at:

640 Harrison Street, Oak Park, Ill.

Date:

26 February 1946

In the presence of:

Monroe Kroll, Special Agent, SIC, 6th SC

Questions by:

Monroe Kroll, Special Agent, SIC, 6th SC

Q. State your name, rank, serial number and permanent home address.

A. John L. Massimino, Sgt., Army of the United States, ASN 20600454, 640 Harrison Street, Oak Park, Illinois, c/o Mrs. Iris A. Myers.

Q. What is the date and place of your birth?

A. July 18, 1915, at Akron, Ohio.

Q. State your education and civilian experience.

A. I graduated from Oak Park High School, Oak Park, Illinois, in 1935. From 1935 to 1937 I ran a machine for the Chicago Screw Company, Chicago, Illinois. From 1937 to 1940 I worked as a floral clerk in an Oak Park florist's shop.

Q. When did you enter the Armed Forces of the United States of America?

A. I enlisted in the Army on November 25, 1940.

Q. Of what country are you a citizen?

A. Of the United States of America.

Q. Have you recently been returned to the United States from abroad?

A. Yes. I returned to the United States in October 1945.

Q. Were you a prisoner of war?

A. Yes.

Q. At what places were you held as a prisoner of war and state the approximate dates at each place?

A. I was captured on Bataan on April 9, 1942. I arrived at Camp O'Donnell about 15 April 1942 and remained there until about sometime in June 1942. In June 1942 I went to Cabanatuan Prisoner of War Camp No. 1 and stayed there until sometime in December 1943. I went to Clark Field on Luzon in December 1943. I remained there until October 1944. I was held at Bilibid Prisoner of War Camp for several weeks and late in October or early in November 1944 I was transferred to Camp Haito on Formosa, arriving there early in December 1944. I remained at Camp Haito until the end of January 1945. I arrived at Naru Camp in the Osaka area in February 1945 and remained there until about May 1945. From May 1945 to September 3, 1945, when I was liberated, I was at Nagoya Sub-Camp No. 9.

Q. Of what outfit were you a member at the time of your capture?

A. Company B of the 192nd Tank Battalion.

Q. Did you witness any atrocities or mistreatment of American citizens at any time?

A. Yes. I witnessed the mistreatment of various American soldiers whose names I do not remember, at Camp Haito, Formosa, by Captain Tamarki of the Japanese Army.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

(End of Page 1 original affidavit.)

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Q. Who was Captain Tamarki?

A. He appeared to be the commandant of Camp Haito.

Q. When did you first see Captain Tamarki?

A. I arrived at Formosa early in December with many Americans sent there from Luzon. One hundred and ten of us were sent to Camp Haito. As soon as we reached the camp, Captain Tamarki conducted a shakedown.

Q. Were you an eyewitness to this shakedown?

A. Yes.

Q. Describe what you saw Captain Tamarki do.

A. He personally went through everybody's belongings and confiscated various items of personal property. He went through my bag and took a packet containing about one hundred multiple vitamin pills which I had received at Clark Field from my sister. He also took two bars of soap from me. He gave the vitamin pills and the soap to a guard who was following him. I saw Captain Tamarki take similar items from the other Americans.

Q. To your knowledge, were any of the items that Captain Tamarki took from you or the others ever returned?

A. No.

Q. State what was told to you about what Captain Tamarki took from the other men at this shakedown.

A. Next day the Americans discussed the shakedown and stated that Captain Tamarki had cleaned out all the medicine and first aid equipment that they had.

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Q. Did you perform any work at Camp Haito?

A. After we were there about five days they started the men working. My job was to load ballast stones on box cars. Along with four other men I had to load three box cars each with ten ton of stone per day. To perform this job we each used a basket called a "punkie". Those who were too ill to perform this type of work, worked on the camp farm.

Q. Do you know of any other instances in which Captain Tamarki mistreated American citizens?

A. Yes.

Q. State what you know of your own knowledge about the incidents.

A. On at least six different days I saw the guards seize different men as we marched into the compound at the end of the day and throw them in a water trough in front of the Japanese guard house. I then saw the guards hold the men under water, head and all. I did not witness the entire proceeding in each case, but saw only a few minutes of each incident. However, in each instance I could hear the rest of the struggle from inside my barrack. After the struggle in the water trough ended I saw the men marched into the guard house. I could then hear the men screaming.

Q. How did you happen to witness the incident mentioned in your last answer?

A. The men were seized by the guards as we came in from our day's work. The guards seized them as the men passed through the gate, and three or four guard carried each man and threw him into the trough in front of the guard house. The guard house was not far from the barracks. As soon as we entered the gate we had to go to a small building close to the guard house in which we left our shoes.

Q. Why did you leave your shoes in this building?

A. It was a Japanese rule that after work we had to take off our shoes and leave them in the building over night.

Q. During the time that the men were thrown into the trough and kept there where was Captain Tamarki on each of the days in question?

A. He was standing right near the trough.

Q. What was he doing there?

A. He appeared to be directing the whole incident.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

(End of Page 2 original affidavit.)

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Q. Did you ever talk to any of the men who were thrown into the water trough and later taken into the guard house?

A. Yes. I spoke to several of the men who I saw thrown into the trough.

Q. What did they say?

- Q. They said that after they were marched into the guard house they were stripped of their clothing and beaten about the legs, back and shoulders, with a bamboo stick, by Captain Tamarki. Some of the men showed me their backs and legs and their arms and face. These parts of their anatomy were all covered with welts.
- Q. Did you ever hear what happened to the other men you saw thrown into the trough?
- A. Yes. Information that they were stripped and beaten by Captain Tamarki got around through the grapevine.
- Q. How long were the men whom you saw thrown into the trough kept in the guard house?
- A. Two or three days.
- Q. Aside from what the men said to you, do you have any other evidence indicating that these men were stripped of their clothing?
- A. Yes. After the men were marched into the guard house on at least three or four occasions, I saw a Japanese guard bring their clothes to our barrack and leave them there.
- Q. Did any of the men say how many times they were beaten while they were in the guard house?
- A. Yes. Those I spoke to said that they were beaten more than once during the time they were in the guard house.
- Q. Do you know whether any of the men received permanent injury as a result of the treatment which you describe?
- A. No, but I know that at least two of the men were very much weakened.
- Q. How do you know that?
- A. After they had received their beatings I saw them pass out at various morning roll calls.
- Q. Do you have anything else to say regarding these beatings?
- A. Yes. Because of the hard labor I was performing I received a day off every two weeks. On one of my days off I was planting cabbages or some similar vegetable, right outside the guard house. During that day I heard a man scream three different times and each time I could distinctly hear Captain Tamarki laugh. This occurred sometime in January. The screams continued for about three or four minutes each time. While the man was screaming I could hear blows.
- Q. What did the blows sound like?
- A. Like a stick hitting against bare flesh.
- Q. Can you describe the climate at Camp Haito while you were there?
- A. Yes. It was very cold. The days were warm but the nights were very cold. The Japanese wore woollen clothing and each slept with at least three blankets.
- Q. Did any of the men say how many times they were beaten while they were in the guard house?
- A. Yes. Those I spoke to said that they were beaten more than once during the time they were in the guard house.
- Q. Do you know whether any of the men received permanent injury as a result of

Q. How do you know that?

A. I cleaned their barracks on several occasions and saw that each bed had three blankets.

Q. Do you have anything else to say about the climate?

A. Each night we were given a canteen full of hot water by the Japanese. By morning this water would be ice cold.

Q. Do you have any knowledge of any other mistreatment of American citizens at Camp Hito?

A. Yes.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

(End of Page 3 Original affidavit.)

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Q. Describe what you know of this incident of your own knowledge?

A. Right after we arrived at Camp Hito, some of the Americans started to get violent headaches. At least half the men got headaches. Ten of us died. The prison doctor was an English medical officer who said that the ailment was a type of brain fever which he could not diagnose.

Q. Was anything done to treat the men suffering from headaches?

A. No.

Q. Continue with your description of what happened, regarding the headache incident.

A. Late in January after the ten men had died, and about one week before we left Hito, Captain Tamarki called all the prisoners, British and American, before him, and made a little talk. He asked how many men had these headaches. Fifty or sixty men raised their hands. Then Captain Tamarki said that that was fine that he had a big cemetery out there and that there was plenty of room in it for all of us and that he was going to try very hard to fill it. Then he laughed and dismissed us.

Q. Do you know any of the men who died from this so-called brain fever?

A. Yes. There was Sgt. Morine of Janesville, Wisconsin who served with Company A of the 192nd tank battalion, AUS; and Sgt. "Dimples" Madison, also of Janesville, Wisconsin who was with the same organization. I was on the burial detail for these two men.

Q. Do you have any other information regarding this incident?

A. Yes. As we were leaving Camp Hito, one of our men developed the illness and was left behind. I know that the English were building a coffin for him as we left, even before he died. After we boarded the boat for Japan, a call came from the Japanese on Formosa ordering the men with headaches to get off the boat. About thirty men got off.

Q. Can you furnish a description of Captain Tamarki?

A. Yes. He was about six feet tall and very fat. He weighed about 240 or 250 pounds. He was light complexioned. He wore glasses. He seemed to have good

teeth. I do not know whether they were false teeth or not but there was no gold in them. He had a high forehead and wore his hair out very short. He told us that he was the owner of a candy factory which manufactured chocolate in Yokohama before the war. He spoke fluent English which he used when addressing the prisoners. He was given to violent fits of anger. The prisoners called Tamarki the "pig" because he was always telling them about the food he was going to eat for his next meal.

- Q. Do you know of any other prisoners who were present at Camp Haito during your stay there?
- A. A Sgt. Maguire or McGuire, of Company B, 192nd Tank Battalion, was at Haito.
- Q. Do you have any further information regarding mistreatment of American citizens by Captain Tamarki?
- A. Yes. I would like to say something about our diet while at Camp Haito.
- Q. Go ahead.
- A. On three different occasions a Japanese Colonel who appeared to be in charge of all the prison camps on Formosa, visited our camp and made a speech to the men. He told us how lucky we were to be in Japanese custody and receive all the food we were getting. He mentioned ducks, geese, pigs and plenty of vegetables, all of which were raised on the camp farm. I wish to point out that on the occasions that this Colonel appeared, we received a fairly good diet but that as soon as he left our diet was reduced to about 450 grams of rice per day and about one potato per day for each man. There were plenty of potatoes grown on this farm and I know that they were washed, cooked and then fed to the pigs, who actually received more to eat than we did.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

(End of Page 4 original affidavit.)

C O N F I D E N T I A L

- Q. Who was responsible for this situation?
- A. Captain Tamarki was the commandant of the camp, and I believe that he was responsible for this situation. Furthermore, on various occasions when Captain Tamarki visited our work detail he would boast to us about the fine meal he was going to have that evening while we were going to eat only rice.
- Q. Do you have anything further to add?
- A. No.

s/ John L. Massimino,
John L. Massimino, Sgt., AUS

State of: Illinois)
) SS
County of: Cook)

I, John L. Massimino, of lawful age, being duly sworn on oath, state that I have read the foregoing transcription of my interrogation and all answers contained therein are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

s/ John L. Massimino
John L. Massimino, Sgt., AUS

Subscribed and sworn to before me on this 1st day of March, 1946.

(SEAL)

s/ Perry A. Ball
(Notary Public)

My commission expires: Dec. 30, 1948.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Monroe Kroll, Special Agent, SIC, 6th SC, certify that John L. Massimino Sgt., ASN 20600454, personally appeared before me on 26 February 1946 and testified concerning war crimes; and that the foregoing is an accurate transcription of the answers given by him to the several questions set forth.

Place: Chicago, Illinois

Date: 1 March 1946

s/ Monroe Kroll
MONROE KROLL, Special Agent, SIC, 6th SC

C O N F I D E N T I A L

(End of Page 5 original affidavit.)